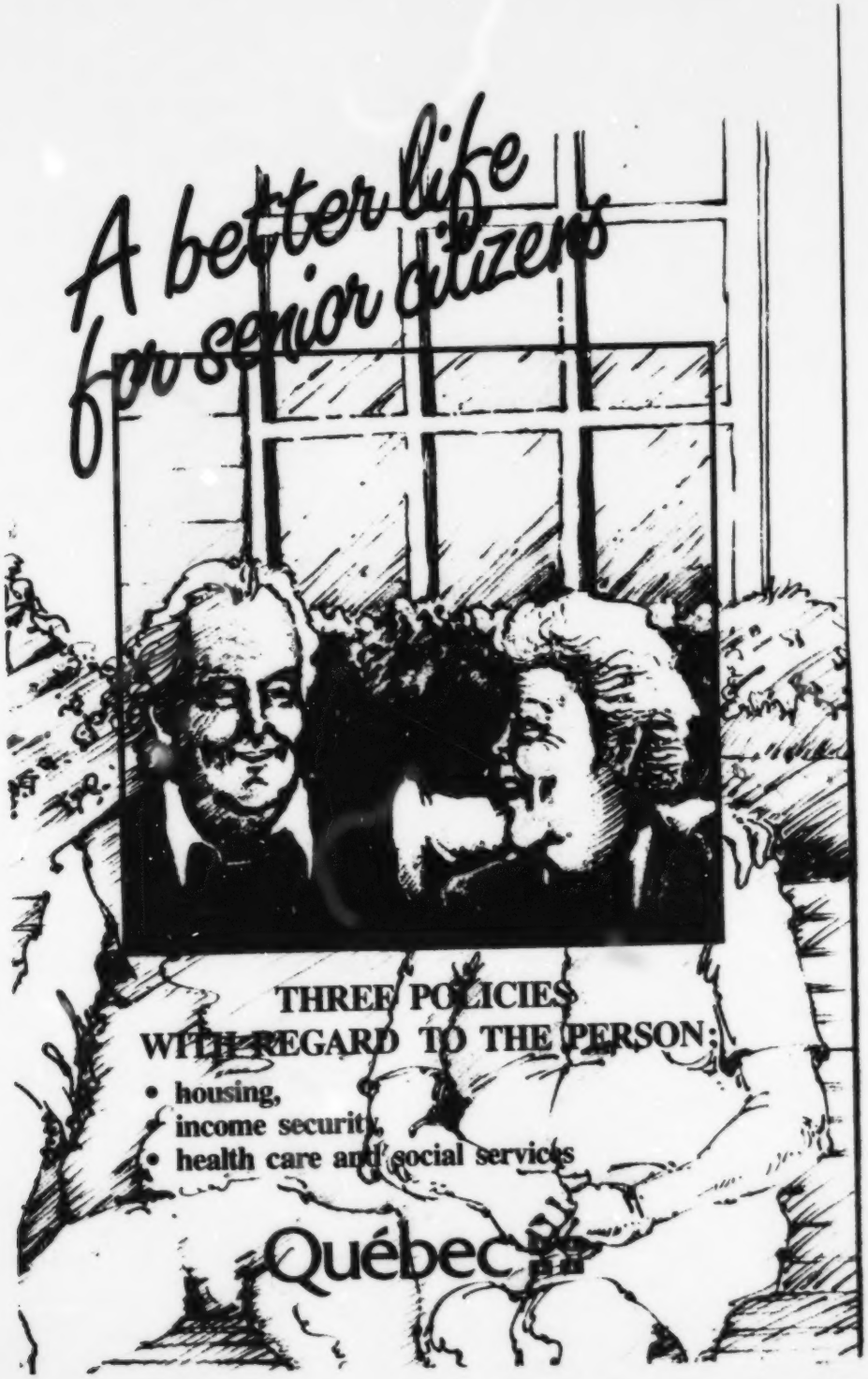
A better life for senior citizens
THREE POLICIES WITH REGARD TO THE PERSON:
• housing,
• income security,
• health care and social services
Québec

A BETTER LIFE
FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Three policies with regard to the person:
housing,
income security,
health care and social services

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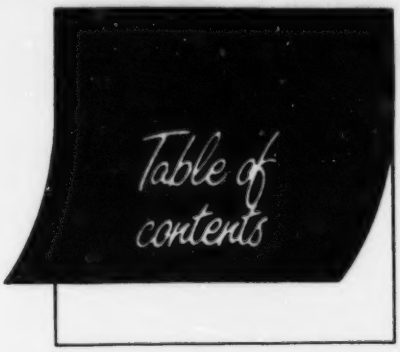

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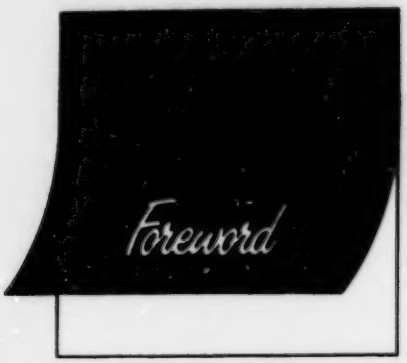

Since 1976, the gouvernement du Québec has taken many steps towards improving the situation of the elderly. Income security, taxation, health and social services, housing, education, leisure, culture, etc. are some of the areas that government action has touched on in order to raise the standard of living and enhance the quality of life of our senior citizens.

Regarding income security, the government has concerned itself with social assistance, the Québec Pension Plan and taxation. Social assistance picks up where the federal old-age security program leaves off and is designed to fill certain specific needs. The Québec Pension Plan provides Québec workers and their surviving spouses with basic protection upon retirement. At the taxation level, in addition to tax exemptions available to Québec taxpayers in general, two tax breaks are offered specifically for the elderly: the age exemption and the deduction for retirement income. Another item worth mentioning is the real estate tax refund program, which, although not limited to the elderly, is another important tax benefit for them.

Regarding health and social services, in addition to the public health insurance and hospitalization insurance plans, the elderly are also eligible for certain special programs: free pharmaceutical services and ambulance transportation, institutional housing in residences, retirement homes and chronic care hospitals. Besides such programs, there are others designed to maintain the elderly in their normal surroundings, through home care services, day-care centres, day-hospitals, foster homes and support of volunteer organizations.

Regarding housing, five programs administered by the Société d'habitation du Québec assist the most disadvantaged members of society in obtaining adequate housing. These are the Collective Housing Assistance Program (LOGIPOP), the Rental Subsidy Program, the Low-Rental Units Program, the Housing Allowance Program for the Elderly (LOGIRENTE) and the Home Restauration Assistance Program (LOGINOVE). These programs are not all specifically intended for the elderly, but in actual fact, the elderly form an important part of the clientele.

In the areas of leisure, education and transportation, government programs are just as widely varied. In addition to offering

the elderly reduced rates in Québec parks and reserves and for hunting and fishing permits, the ministère du Loisir, de la Chasse et de la Pêche also administers four programs containing provisions specifically directed at the elderly population. These are financial assistance to socio-cultural organizations, support for institutions specializing in the development of recreational activities, vacation camps and outdoor centres (offering activities for the elderly), and, lastly, assistance to local recreational organizations. The ministère de l'Éducation also assists the elderly in three ways: first, through adult education courses available in the entire Québec school network; second, through the training of specialized personnel in geriatrics and gerontology, and third, by courses to prepare people for retirement given by the school boards and the training of the resource people assigned to these courses. In the area of transportation, the elderly benefit from reduced rates on most kinds of transportation, and the ministère des Transports contributes directly to these reductions by subsidizing the various municipal and inter-municipal transportation organizations.

Under all these programs, most of which were implemented in 1976, billions of dollars have been spent each year by the government to support the elderly. Even greater sums will have to be spent in the near future, because of the aging of the population and an increase in the number of elderly persons. It will become ever more important to ensure not only that public resources are properly used but also that their use results in an improvement in the quality of life of the elderly. Aware of the scale of the task that lies ahead and committed to honouring its past and present obligations, the gouvernement du Québec has chosen to tackle the problem immediately.

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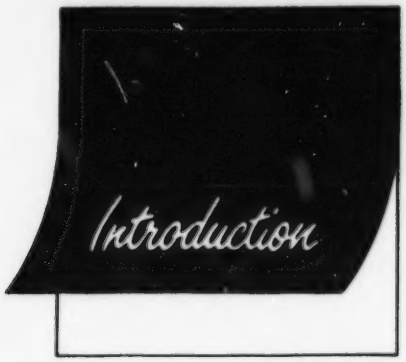


Three policies, a single approach and convergent action.

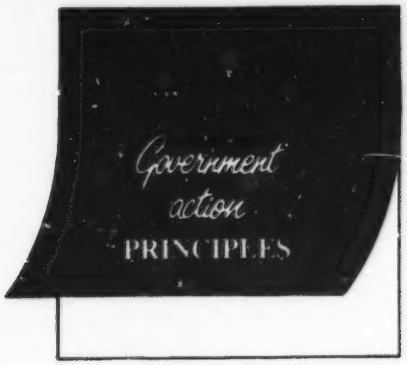
Several years ago the gouvernement du Québec began considering and becoming sensitive to the problems faced by the elderly. Out of this process came a publication in early 1980 by the ministère des Affaires sociales, entitled "Growing Old in Québec". Also, at about the same time, another government publication, "Pour mieux répondre aux besoins de nos aînés", fueled public debate on income security for the elderly. Subsequent discussion and consultation clearly demonstrated the necessity for the government to assess the special needs of the elderly population of Québec and to adopt suitable policies and programs.

A few months ago, a Green Book on the government's housing policy was published. Entitled "Se loger au Québec", this document outlines a strategy for global action on the question of housing that takes into account the special needs of the elderly population. Now, in quick succession, a policy statement regarding the elderly has been published by the ministère des Affaires sociales, entitled "Sharing a New Age" and a project for the reform of the income security program upon retirement, "Action now for tomorrow". These three documents represent as many programs for concrete action that the gouvernement du Québec intends to take in three main areas important to the welfare of the elderly.

In addition to outlining the general direction that will be pursued by the government, these publications have the same view of the main problems facing the elderly and the kinds of solutions possible as a common basis. This agreement on what government action for the elderly should be based on not only underlies each of the policies we have just mentioned, but also allows for unity of action and greater coherence among programs: first, overall coherence in all policies and programs directed at the elderly and second, coherence within departments since they are responsible for developing and implementing the policies.

Government
action

What are the factors on which the various departments reached a concensus? What is the common vision that seems to inspire the action of the various departments? Actually, there are a certain number of principles arising from public consideration of the problem on which most participants and interested parties agree. Formulated in various ways depending on the departments, these principles have guided the work of the various teams. There is also agreement on the basic objectives to pursue in the development of government action regarding the elderly.



The three guiding principles are the following: elderly people are autonomous and responsible, they are full citizens, and responsibility toward the elderly is a shared responsibility. These principles determine the type of approach chosen by the government to deal with the situation of the elderly, they set the tone for the form and content of future government action.

Elderly people are autonomous and responsible

Departure from the labour market, the resulting drop in income and a lack of knowledge about the physiological aging process are largely responsible for the way the elderly become relegated to the fringes of society. Most people mistakenly believe that the elderly are unable to care for themselves, are dependent on others and must be completely taken care of. These ideas are mainly prejudice, a superficial judgment that does not stand up to close scrutiny of the actual facts.

Throughout their lives, the elderly have shouldered their responsibilities, taking care of themselves and their families. The desire to rise to new challenges does not disappear at the age of 65, any more than the ability to care for oneself. The stereotype of the elderly — passive, sick, incapable of making decisions — must be eliminated, because on the one hand, it is not representative of reality and, on the other hand, it results in the marginalization of the elderly, and, more importantly, it leads directly to the conclusion that everything must be decided and organized for them.

In most cases, the elderly are as autonomous and responsible as all other Québec adults. They are still fully capable of leading the kind of life they choose, and thus it is up to them to decide on the lifestyle that is right for them, their place of residence, and so forth, according to their personal set of values, principles and life experiences. At the age of 65, people can still decide what is desirable for themselves.

It is indeed true that a large proportion of the elderly have an insufficient income, health problems and difficulties finding suitable housing. They are in a vulnerable position, and government

programs are intended to help them face these problems and reduce their impact.

Nevertheless, bureaucratization and the professionalization of services sometimes create a context in which the ability of the elderly to care for themselves is forgotten. Efforts to assist them should not mean yielding to the temptation to meddle in their lives or make decisions for them.

Elderly people are full members of Québec society

Because of their earlier contributions, the elderly rightfully deserve to participate in Québec society. Those in the "golden years" should not be viewed simply as honourary citizens who are to be treated with deference and respect but whose participation in social life is merely symbolic. They are full citizens who wish to be consulted and wish to participate in society's choices. An individual's ability to contribute to society does not end when he leaves the labour market. Unfortunately, the society in which we live too often tends to associate productive work with participation in the labour market, and to overestimate such participation compared to other forms of productive work (especially mutual assistance, volunteer work and household work).

Ways of using the human potential represented by the elderly must be found. Society would be enriched, and the elderly would feel that they were still useful, valuable members of society.

The elderly can become involved in social action and commitment not only to defend their rights and improve their lot but also to help others and work actively for the well-being of the entire community. They have the time and the experience, valuable assets they can put to the use of the community to which they belong.

Québec society should learn how to benefit from this untapped human reservoir if the elderly are truly to feel and be treated as full citizens.

Responsibility toward the elderly: a shared responsibility

It is the responsibility of Québec society as a whole to ensure that the elderly enjoy normal living conditions. This responsibility does not lie with the government only, it is a shared responsibility. It is also the responsibility of the elderly themselves, their immediate families and friends, associations for the elderly and the community in which they live. In recent decades, there has been a tendency to forget how essential children, grandchildren, friends and acquaintances are to the quality of the elderly person's life. This is true on an emotional level but also, to a certain extent, on the level of financial and material security. In a similar vein, the elderly themselves and the associations that represent them are in the best position to identify the problems of the elderly and often, to solve

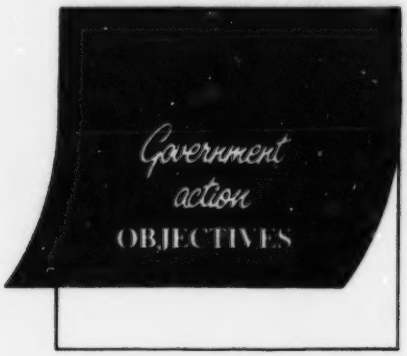
them. Their role is not merely to draw attention to their needs, it is also to participate actively in filling such needs.

The pursuit of equity for their citizens has led the government in recent years to measures designed to satisfy essential needs of all categories of citizens and adequately protect all individuals against the most common, serious risks: sickness, poverty, unemployment, etc. Of course, those who gained the most from such measures were naturally those who were most at risk. It should also be mentioned that only the State had sufficient means to tackle such a task. These major services should continue to be provided by the State in the future.

The State should not, however, be expected to look after everything or to take care of every need of individuals in general, and elderly people in particular.

That is not its role; it does not have the necessary resources to do so and it is questionable whether that is even desirable. For the State to completely take over all responsibilities concerning the problems of the elderly is not the answer. What is needed is to encourage the various groups concerned to share in the responsibility for the well-being of the elderly, and for the elderly themselves to become involved. Each participant should in his own way, at his own level, assume his share of responsibility, along with the State.

The elderly themselves, their associations, their families and the communities in which they live are in a position to work on setting up services in addition to those provided by the government. Experiments in various places in Québec in recent years are ample proof of this. The role of the State could be to encourage and coordinate such initiatives, perhaps even provide a certain amount of financial or material backing for services that have demonstrated their usefulness so that they are available across Québec. There is no question, however, but that most initiatives should come from the local communities and the elderly themselves.



Having laid out the basic principles guiding the government in the elaboration of its policies and programs concerning the elderly, let us now turn our attention to the objectives the government intends to pursue. There are two objectives, which are the direct result of the aforementioned principles: the first goal is to improve the quality of life enjoyed by the elderly, while the second, goal is to develop programs that are better integrated and adapted to the needs of the elderly.

Improving the quality of life of the elderly

Quality of life is a very vast concept that can be interpreted in many different ways. Some will stress the most visible aspect of the concept, that is, material living conditions: income, housing, health, etc. Others will stress the intangible or subjective aspects, pointing out that although living conditions do strongly colour our perception of the quality of our own lives, it is above all the feeling of usefulness to someone or something, the feeling of being accepted and respected, and even the feeling of loving and being loved, which maintain and reinforce a positive self-image, that contribute equally and independently to the quality of our lives. Moreover, to ensure an adequate quality of life, no doubt both of these aspects must receive attention.

For the government, improvement in the quality of life of the elderly must of course include the creation of conditions whereby all elderly individuals are guaranteed a decent standard of living.

Government work in this area takes different forms and proceeds at varying paces depending on the sector, but this basic objective, which has been a drain on government resources in the past, still forms the bulk of government action. Improvement in the quality of life of the elderly also means stressing the development of conditions that favour a harmonious balance between the material conditions and the subjective aspects of their lives.

With this in mind, the government intends to pursue the following secondary objectives: favour the maintenance and the development of the autonomy of the elderly, help the elderly remain in

their natural surroundings and encourage their participation in community life.

Elderly people wish to remain autonomous instead of becoming a burden on society. They would like to take full responsibility for their lives. Despite these intentions, it may be that physical or financial limits reduce their autonomy. Government action should be directed at maintaining and developing the physical and economic autonomy of the elderly.

Similarly, most elderly persons would like to go on living in a familiar environment, near their families and friends. They also prefer to live in their apartment or home rather than in a residence or retirement home, but this is not always possible when support is inadequate. Consequently, it is necessary to provide housing adapted to their needs, adequate home care and services, easily accessible socio-sanitary equipment and so forth.

Nevertheless, simply living in a familiar environment is not enough for the elderly person to feel and truly become part of social and community life. Social integration of the elderly requires them to take an active part in the events and activities of the community to which they belong. To achieve this result, both the community and the elderly people must demonstrate their willingness to cooperate. The government should make the social organizations and local communities aware of the need to involve the elderly in their activities and encourage the elderly and their associations to become actively involved in the community.

Developing programs that are better integrated and adapted to the needs of the elderly

To improve the quality of life of the elderly, which is the first objective of government action, the government will have to strengthen its existing programs and add new ones. In both cases, given the current high level of commitment and the scarcity of new resources, attention should be concentrated on the integration of programs, their complementary nature, and their capacity for adequately fulfilling the most pressing needs of the elderly.

A better knowledge of the needs of the elderly and how they change should be the basis for the development of programs and services. It would also be appropriate to provide for further development of research into the living conditions of the elderly in Québec and put an end to the state of chronic disorganization which now characterizes such research. Special attention must be paid to following up experiments in Québec and abroad affecting the elderly as well as experiment preparation, implementation and evaluation. Further advancement of knowledge will make it possible to improve existing programs and services so as to make them reflect the needs of the elderly more accurately. Significantly, it will also lead to a broader range of services and programs. The government has

already set up a number of programs designed to ensure that the essential needs of the elderly population are met. These programs will be continued in the future, but in view of their limits with regard to the everyday needs of the elderly, it will also be necessary to give more attention to measures that reach the elderly in their places of residence: primary care services, prevention, information, home care services, etc.

The State should ensure that these "light" services are available and that those who need them have access to them. This does not mean, however, that the State should assume the entire responsibility for them.

While broadening the range of services offered and improving those currently provided, the government will also have to face the challenge of maintaining accessibility of services. When new services are provided for the elderly, it will be important to ensure that all elderly persons have equal access to them. In urban areas, accessibility and proximity often go hand-in-hand, whereas, in rural areas this is not always the case, and special solutions must be found to guarantee an adequate level of accessibility. The government intends to tackle this problem afresh.

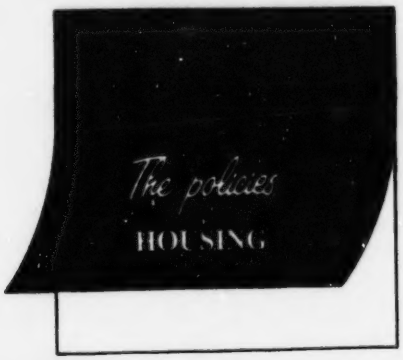
It is essential but not sufficient for departments to prepare new policies and programs that are more complete, better adapted and more accessible. A significant part of the improvement in services for the elderly population will come from the cooperation that they will show in the implementation of the policies and programs of other departments. Concretely, various departments can exchange services in order to facilitate their individual action and make it easier to achieve the government's goals. Thus, support to volunteer organizations that care for the elderly can take many forms other than a direct subsidy from the department concerned: assistance in finding facilities, meeting halls, information and advertising support, ans so on, could be supplied by other departments that are in a better position to provide these services.

The policies

The establishment of principles and general objectives guiding the various departments and organizations that serve the elderly create a framework for government action. This is a necessary phase of the process that leads to concerted action. Although necessary, it is not sufficient in itself, since willingness to act on such intentions may be lacking. However such is not the case.

The nearly simultaneous publication by the gouvernement du Québec of three departmental policy statements that will have a major impact on the elderly gives a good indication of the importance the government attaches not only to the living conditions of the elderly, but also to the rapid improvement in government services and programs intended for them. The government intends to deal head-on with the three main factors likely to significantly improve the quality of life of the elderly.

Once again, simultaneous action is not enough, there must also be convergence of the actions of all parties, to ensure increased efficiency. In other words, appropriate measures must be coordinated so as to reinforce their effects on various matters covered by different policies.



Although it cannot replace individual responsibility and initiative in housing, the ministère de l'Habitation et de la Protection du consommateur can contribute to the establishment of conditions that help the elderly stay in their natural surroundings. This is in fact the task that receives priority in the Green Book on Housing which is currently going through a consultation process. Measures proposed by the ministère de l'Habitation et de la Protection du consommateur directed specifically at the elderly include a reduction in the cost of housing, development of a supply of properly adapted housing units, assistance for the provision of certain home services and the promotion of the reverse mortgage.

Housing needs of the elderly are as widely varied as those of the rest of the population. Furthermore, they are likely to change much more rapidly after retirement for some people. All government measures for the elderly must take into account both this diversity and the rapid changes in needs. On a concrete level, a sufficient supply of housing adapted to their needs through all stages of old age must be ensured, from an ordinary housing unit to lodging in a chronic care hospital, if necessary. The department's contribution will be to intensify efforts already underway to improve the supply for the first stage of old age, that is, ordinary lodging. This will be accomplished by maintaining financial accessibility to private sector housing for the elderly with a low income through the Housing Allowance Program for the Elderly (LOGIRENTE). Other measures include adequate financial support to specialized housing cooperatives and to projects sponsored by non-profit organizations so as to encourage the development of such forms of housing, and pursuit of a policy reserving a number of low-rental units for the elderly and adapting them to their needs.

Staying in their natural surroundings does not always mean that elderly persons will remain where they were living before or join other elderly people in an apartment building for the elderly only. It can also mean living with their children or grandchildren. The ministère de l'Habitation et de la Protection du consommateur intends to assist those families who wish to shelter an elderly relative. This assistance could take many forms, for instance, eligibil-

ity of these families to the Home Ownership Assistance Program and to the residential renovation and restoration incentive programs (to add an apartment, or adapt the lodging to their needs).

The ministère de l'Habitation et de la Protection du consommateur is aware that, for the elderly to stay in their natural surroundings, not only must properly adapted housing be available and financially accessible, but also adequate home services must be provided to those who need them. With this in mind, the department intends to work with the ministère des Affaires sociales to ensure that the services provided in public housing are improved. The department also intends to encourage local initiatives designed to support the elderly living in their own homes, for example, help in moving or with household chores and small repairs, and will provide information on the services available. By keeping this information up-to-date and publishing it, the ministère de l'Habitation et de la Protection du consommateur could contribute to the development and distribution of such services in various regions.

Finally, the ministère de l'Habitation et de la Protection du consommateur wishes to promote the reverse mortgage which it sees as a way to increase the financial autonomy of the elderly while helping them to stay in their usual surroundings. This type of mortgage is relatively rare in North America; it is designed to provide a retired home owner with an annual income drawn from the assets that his property represents, while allowing him to occupy his home. A number of elderly Québec homeowners may be interested in the formula of the reverse mortgage, and some Québec financial institutions are currently studying the possibility of offering these mortgages. The department will therefore wish to discuss with the parties concerned the appropriateness of offering this kind of mortgage to elderly homeowners.

The policy of the gouvernement du Québec with regard to income security on retirement rests upon two fundamental principles guiding government action, namely individual autonomy and collective solidarity.

On the subject of income security on retirement, the principle of individual responsibility means that everyone, to the extent that financial means permit, should not only provide for his or her needs during working years, but should also make sure that there will be a certain continuity in standard of living on retirement, either through personal savings or through eligility for a pension from a private plan. It must be recognized, however, that for various reasons (physical or mental disability, extended unemployment, non-participation in the labour market, etc.) some people will have difficulty in providing for their needs and will find it even less possible to put money aside in order to provide for their own maintenance after the normal retirement age. The principle of collective solidarity, therefore, would require that society assure these people of a minimum level of well-being with those who have the means assisting members of society who have inadequate or no resources. Such is the role played by the social assistance programs. Furthermore, it must be recognized that retirement represents a significant risk for a majority of individuals and that, in this respect, the community as a whole must take on the responsibility for providing basic protection against this risk.

Such is the role played by the social insurance programs, such as the Québec Pension Plan.

Bearing these principles in mind, the government believes that the system of income security on retirement should aim for the financial autonomy of the elderly:

- by guaranteeing workers, through the public pension plans, a level of income replacement that would allow them to be independant of social assistance upon retirement;
- by guaranteeing a basic minimum income to the elderly persons who have not participated, or have participated only to a limited extent in the labour market.

An analysis of our present system of retirement income reveals serious deficiencies, particularly as regards the replacement of earnings, since a considerable number of workers must have recourse to social assistance programs when they retire.

To correct this situation, the statement on the policy and strategy for action, entitled *Acting now for tomorrow*, announces, as an initial step, a series of measures designed to increase the efficiency of the private pension plans, to place the financing of the Québec Pension Plan on a sound footing, and to provide, under this latter plan, for the sharing of pension income between spouses.

With regard to the private pension plans, changes are aimed specifically at:

- permitting greater access to these plans, in particular for part-time workers;
- providing for the earlier vesting of the employer's contributions and guaranteeing that the latter, added to the worker's own contributions, will truly provide a retirement income;
- guaranteeing to members who withdraw from a pension plan, a reasonable rate of interest on their contributions and the possibility of transferring their accumulated pension credits;
- providing better protection to the surviving spouses of deceased pension plan members;
- permitting those employees who so wish, to take a more active part in the administration of their pension plan.

As for the Québec Pension Plan, the measures announced are aimed at introducing a true financing formula which would ensure the long-term survival of the Plan and guarantee that it will always be able to pay the benefits for which it is committed to its members. Furthermore, in view of the precarious situation in which many elderly women find themselves, the government believes that it should recognize the fact that a retirement pension from the public plan constitutes a family asset which belongs equally to both spouses. To this effect, the government announces that there will be an automatic division of pension credits on divorce and, on retirement, of annuities accumulated during the time that the spouses have lived together.

Secondly, the document points out that, even if the measures announced will go a long way towards improving the financial security of the elderly, it would be advisable to proceed to a more comprehensive reform of our present system of income security on retirement, in order to restore to each of the existing programs its true role of improving the level of replacement of earned income and reducing dependence on social assistance upon retirement. To achieve this end, the government favours the approach which consists of improving the Québec Pension Plan by increasing the rate of replacement from 25% to 50% on the first half of the earnings

covered by the Plan ($23,400 in 1985). This increase would make it possible to provide a better replacement of income on retirement and to reduce the incidence of Guaranteed Income Supplement to low income earners, while leaving the role of supplementing the income of middle and high income earners to the private pension plans.

Other more specific improvements which could be made in the Pension Plan are, for example:

- to reduce the number of years of contributions necessary to obtain a full pension;
- to adapt the surviving spouse's annuities to the realities of modern society, taking into account the greater participation of women in the labour market;
- to entrust to the private sector the administration of part of the Plan's fund.

Moreover, in order to further rationalize the pension system, the government believes that it would be necessary to modify the federal Guaranteed Income Supplement program so as to limit its operation to the fight against poverty, by further channelling its benefits to those who have no other financial resources.

Altogether, these measures would involve a significant increase in contributions which would be added to that necessitated by the overhaul of the financing of the present plan alone. Although the contribution rates which would result seem very high, it must be remembered that these high rates will be offset in part by the savings in the Guaranteed Income Supplement and in the supplemental pension plans, which will be brought about by the improvement of the Pension Plan.

Also, in order to prevent the contributions to the Plan from becoming too heavy a burden for low income earners, it would be necessary to use the savings realized in the Guaranteed Income Supplement to reimburse these workers a portion of their contributions, by means, for example, of a tax credit. Instead of waiting until their retirement to make social assistance payments to low income earners, we should help them, during their working years, to accumulate pension rights like all other workers. Likewise, it would be necessary to revise the contribution method for businesses, in order to reduce the burden on small businesses.

The government is aware, however, that such a reform is subject to constraints of the following nature:

- political, since it involves programs over which the government has no control;
- economic, since it involves an increase in contributions at a time when the creation of employment and the private sector's capacity to compete are prime considerations;

- social, since it calls upon workers to set aside more savings for their retirement.

These constraints are not insurmountable, but they demonstrate the extent to which this reform constitutes a vision of society which can be realized only if a concensus is reached by the majority of the parties involved. This is the reason why the government intends to consult all persons affected by the pension plans before proceeding to a general reform of the system.

In its policy with regard to the elderly, the ministère des Affaires sociales places emphasis first of all on the maintenance, recovery and development of functional autonomy, as well as on the services which will permit those older people who are interested in and capable of remaining in their usual surroundings to do so as long as possible.

To achieve this goal, it will be necessary to ensure that elderly people are well informed about the physical and psychological effects of aging, about the lifestyle habits to maintain and develop (regular and balanced meals, physical activities, etc.) in order to remain autonomous and about preventive behaviour to be adopted in the activities of daily life (avoid work requiring violent effort, take care not to fall, etc.). There are, therefore, measures to be taken and habits to be changed but, above all, elderly people themselves must be convinced that, despite certain normal adjustments, it is possible to remain at home and to lead independent lives there, and that it will be possible, in order to do this, to count on the support of friends and neighbours, family, volunteer workers and specialists. The reduction in physical strength or the need to receive certain care or treatment on a regular basis should not drive elderly people, against their will, to apply for admission to retirement homes or to chronic care hospitals.

The ministère des Affaires sociales intends to make the general population aware of the primary role which the usual support network (family, relatives, friends, neighbours, mutual aid groups) plays and can play in the maintenance of elderly people in their normal surroundings. Through appropriate information and increased financial support of voluntary community organizations, the department will encourage activities aimed at helping elderly people to find the care and assistance they need in their own network of contacts. Rather than replace these mutual aid arrangements, the public services will complement and support them.

Thus, several establishments have set up day programs and activities aimed at less autonomous elderly people, living outside retirement homes or hospitals, such as health care and assistance, medical supervision and pharmaceutical advice, psychosocial services

etc. The development of these activities and programs will be encouraged at the same time as the short-term hospitals will be urged to set up specific programs (admission, orientation, emergency, outpatients' clinic, rehabilitation, etc.) to respond to the special needs of the elderly.

For those who are unable to go out to receive medical care, the local community service centres (Centres locaux de services communautaires - CLSC) already offer home care and assistance services. These services will be gradually increased in order to allow the CLSCs to reach a wider clientele. In the same way, the ministère des Affaires sociales, which is already initiating certain trials in the area of specialized home care (hemodialysis, oxygentherapy, etc.) intends to examine how and under what conditions these services could be established throughout Québec.

Finally, for the elderly people who are experiencing a personal or family crisis which, if it is not resolved in time, could result in a worsening of the situation or in an irreversible loss of independence, the regional health and social service councils (Conseils régionaux de la santé et des services sociaux - CRSSS), in collaboration with the establishments concerned, will have to work out a regional social emergency policy which will allow for the mobilization, when necessary, of all those establishments which would be expected to participate.

In regard to shelter, the concern of the ministère des Affaires sociales is to ensure an adequate supply of resources midway between individual lodging and accommodation in a retirement home or chronic care hospital.

Elderly people must have the choice between various accomodation alternatives: continue to live in their house or appartment; join a housing cooperative for elderly people or move into a low rental building reserved in whole or in part for elderly people; live with a few other elderly people in a foster home, move into a residence with other elderly people who are experiencing a slight loss of autonomy, etc. Certain elderly people need services which, due to their nature and degree, cannot be provided by those around them or by their community. For these people, the retirement home and the chronic care hospital may represent the most appropriate accommodation facilities. The others, however, must be able to choose the type of accommodation which suits them, taking into consideration their degree of autonomy and the support which they might require. The varied needs and aspirations of elderly people make it necessary to set up a whole range of residential facilities. The department will place emphasis, in the coming years, on the development of intermediate shelter resources.

For elderly people who remain with their families, the ministère des Affaires sociales will see to it that adequate temporary shelter facilities are provided. Several hundred residential places will be

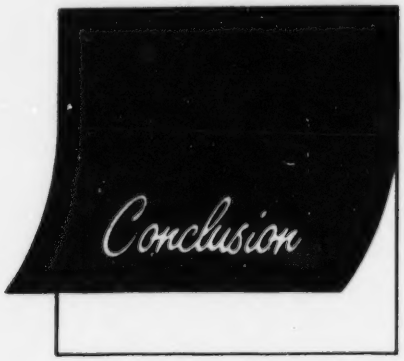
reserved to meet the sporadic needs of families who look after elderly people, so that care can be provided while the family is on holiday or moving, or during a period of domestic or other crisis.

Internally, the ministère des Affaires sociales wishes to take steps to improve the training of the various participants in the Social Affairs network who work with elderly people, whether it be clinical, non-clinical, administrative or volunteer personnel. The accent will be placed on respect for elderly people and on the need for their involvement, as active partners, in any actions directed at them. The department will endeavour also to ensure that progress is made towards the humanization of services, by insisting on the quality of the reception offered and on the provision of individualized services.

In this respect, a new division of administrative responsibility between the various components of the Social Affairs network will allow the administration of the social and health services for the aged to be in closer touch with the clientele and will permit the concentration of reception and referral responsibilities. It is the CLSCs which will take on the responsibility of receiving elderly people, of drawing up individual plans for services and of coordinating many of the services offered to these people by the department. As long as elderly people remain in their normal surroundings and can take advantage of their own abilities and of the resources available in their own environment or those provided by the CLSCs, then, it is the function of the CLSCs to intervene when necessary.

The Social Service Centre (Centre de services sociaux-CSS), for the purpose of community protection, will also have the responsibility, in collaboration with the resource organizations in the district, of ensuring that elderly people who live in surroundings designated by the term "unlicensed homes" receive the services their condition requires.

Finally, on a local level, the community health departments (Départements de santé communautaire - DSC) will be responsible for establishing and updating a health profile of the elderly population in their district. They will also see to the identification of health problems among the aged and will be responsible for developing, evaluating and updating community health programs for the promotion of health among the elderly.



Elderly people's needs are many and varied. They will continue to grow in the future as the older population increases. A start must be made now in adapting government action to the reality of this situation, if we want to be able to deal with it. The three policies that the government has just made public constitute an initial response to the immediate need for improved services to the elderly population, and to the considerable challenge for the future posed by the aging of Québec's population.

It is an important step. It was essential to ensure that the various actions complete and reinforce each other with the help of a common approach. This being so, agreement has to be reached on the numerous other steps to be taken in the areas of work, education, leisure and cultural activities, etc. There again, it will be necessary to ensure that objectives coincide and that actions complement one another.

But the greatest challenge, the one which will undoubtedly decide, in the end, the success of the whole operation, which has just begun, is to ensure that people at all levels share in the responsibility towards the elderly. Improving the quality of life of the elderly is largely dependant on the collective responsibility and solidarity of the entire Québec society.

This document concerning elderly persons and entitled "A Better Life for Senior Citizens" has been prepared by the Standing Cabinet Committee on Social Development which is chaired the Minister of Social Affairs, Guy Chevrette.

In addition to Mr. Chevrette, this Cabinet Committee comprises:

Francine Lalonde
Minister responsible for the Status of Women

Pauline Marois
Minister of Manpower and Income Security

Robert Dean
Minister responsible for Employment and Concerted Action

Elie Fallu
Minister responsible for Citizen Relations

Jacques Rochefort
Minister of Housing and Consumer Protection